

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	4 May 2021
Report of the	-	Chief Executive
Subject	-	Decisions taken as a matter of urgency at Cabinet Meetings

The Council is asked to receive the report of Cabinet, in accordance with paragraph 4 of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules and 17(a) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, on a decision taken as a matter of urgency at its meeting held on 8 April 2021. (Council to note that there were no urgent decisions taken at the Cabinet meetings held on 1 and 29 March 2021).

CABINET – 8 April 2021

CB20/126. **ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT - DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RESTART GRANT SCHEME**

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director Resources that set out details of the Government's national restart scheme to assist businesses with the costs of restarting trading following the national lockdown. The scheme was available to businesses with a national non domestic rating and grants of up to £18,000 would be allocated to hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym business premises, as detailed at Appendix A to the report. The national scheme was already live and the Council was processing applications received from businesses for the grant funding.

Alongside this, a further discretionary start up grant scheme was also available for those businesses without a rating liability, subject to national and locally set criteria and Members were invited to consider the proposals set out within the report for the new discretionary grant scheme. It was noted that charities were not specifically mentioned; however charity shops would be covered by the national scheme, in any event.

Officers had reviewed the previous business sectors supported by the Council as set out at Appendix B to the report and had recommended which of these should be carried through to the new scheme. An assessment had also been undertaken as to the appropriate level of grant that could be offered as follows:

Category	Grant
Shared Accommodation	£2,667
Retail, hospitality and Leisure supply chain #	£2,667
Bed & Breakfast	£8,000
Market Traders	£500

Category	Grant
Holiday accommodation including self-contained holiday lets and small campsites	£8,000
Events	£8,000
Home Based 'in person' businesses – hair and beauty	£500

The current Additional Restrictions Grant discretionary grant scheme had a total fund of £2.7m and as of 29 March 2021, £1.5m had been paid out. Based on the number of businesses previously applying for support, using the suggested amounts under the new scheme, an estimated £860,000 could be paid out in discretionary restart grants, leaving approximately £300,000. Further funds of £425m were announced for the discretionary restart grants by Government, but accessing this was dependent on spending the original allocation of funding (£2.7m). Whilst the Council had delivered grants efficiently and effectively, it was unlikely that the balance of the original funding would be spent by the 30 June deadline to receive this extra funding.

The flexibility of this funding did afford the Council to be creative with how it could support businesses restart the local and national economy and the following were proposed:

- a. **Late applications for national lockdown 3 grants** – eligible businesses that failed to apply for the latest grant support (the same criteria and grant amounts to apply as for the national scheme).
- b. **Promotion of the Rother area** – marketing and promotion of the Rother area to attract new businesses to set up or relocate and to promote visitors to the district through the 1066 country brand and as recently approved by Cabinet, Sussex Modern.
- c. **Business Start-up/expansion/relocation support** – to establish a fund of £200,000 (to be expended by March 2022) to help businesses start, expand (with increased employment) or relocate to the Rother area.

It was reported that proposals b and c had been referred to the department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy for guidance, which was still awaited.

Members were keen to ensure that businesses that met the criteria were made aware of the grant funding and encouraged to apply; all Members and parish and town clerks were urged to help promote the scheme to relevant businesses in their locations. Members paid tribute to the small officer team that had supported the local businesses through the various grant schemes to date for speedy and efficient processing and one to one support.

It was agreed to delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Finance and Performance Management and Economic Development and Regeneration to finalise the amounts of grants and detailed criteria. Whilst every effort would be made to ensure that as many businesses as possible would be eligible for funding by reviewing the criteria, this

needed to be carefully balanced so as not to result in unintended consequences such as businesses that had been able to trade being eligible to apply.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the Additional Restrictions Grant - Discretionary Business Restart Grant Scheme outlined in the report be approved;
- 2) the other proposals for utilising the Government funding (a) late applications for national lockdown 3 grants, b) promotion of the Rother area and c) business start-up / expansion / relocation support) be approved, subject to guidance from the department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy; and
- 3) the Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Finance and Performance Management and Economic Development and Regeneration to finalise the amounts of grants and detailed criteria.

The Chairman of Council had agreed that this decision could be taken as a matter of urgency to allow the Council to implement the scheme as soon as possible.

(Councillor Prochak declared a personal interest in this matter as a Chair of a charity that had received a grant in the past and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

(Cabinet Agenda Item 5)

Malcolm Johnston
Chief Executive